VIETNAM

STOP AMERICA'S CRIMINAL WAR

IVOR MONTAGU

a communist party pamphlet

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by

Ivor Montagu

> ***"The world situation appears to be extremely serious. . . . The cruelty of this war, and the suffering it has caused the people of Vietnam, are a constant reproach to the conscience of humanity. . . . Today it seems to me, as it has seemed for many months, that the pressure of events is remorselessly leading towards a major war. . . ."*** **(U Thant, Secretary General of the United Nations, announcing reluctance to offer himself for re-election, Sept. 1st, 1966.)**

MOST people would agree that the Vietnam war is a bad thing, for several reasons. One is the suffering it inflicts. Its utter savagery, said Philip Noel-Baker at the Labour Party Conference, revolts the conscience of mankind. A second is its poisoning of the international atmosphere. Progress towards disarmament or even a bettering of relations between the sides in the cold war is unthinkable while it continues. And a third is the terrible danger, alluded to by U Thant, that if it is not stopped it can only grow.

A fourth, and perhaps the gravest of all from the point of view of the implications for all of us, is that it consists of air attack by a very big and powerful country on a small one in an effort to deny the latter its independence and, contrary to international agreement, break it permanently into two parts. As de Gaulle said on October 29th "the bombing of a small people by a very great one . . . seems to us absurd and detestable".

Some might like to turn their backs on the slaughter and the suffering. After all, it is thousands of miles away. But it is there, in Asia; and nowadays the world is small. A war does not just go on. Either it is brought to an end, and peace established, or it gets bigger and bigger as efforts are made to win it.

Few realise how big the Vietnam war is already.

Official figures of the cost to the United States of America have not been published, but the chairman of both the Armed Services Committee and the Preparedness Sub-Committee of the U.S. Senate have estimated expenditure at £23,500,000 a day, or £8,600,000,000 a year.

Figures published in the middle of October 1966 showed that there were already in South Vietnam 320,000 U.S. troops—U.S. Defence Secretary McNamara has given it as 385,000 by January 1967—apart from 600,000 South Vietnam puppet government troops and militia, and 50,000 from various U.S. allies—Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, the Philippines—together with airmen and technicians from Bonn, British police and jungle warfare training

officers in Saigon and British airfield maintenance staffs in Thailand.

The U.S. Seventh Fleet, the mightiest naval force in Asia, controls the coastal waters and supervises the landing at specially constructed and defended ports of every sort of military supplies and ammunition.

Not only do U.S. bomber aircraft fly from bases in South Vietnam and Thailand, but B52 long-distance aircraft have bombed from Guam and other bases in the Pacific. According to U.S. figures, bombing missions flown in 1965 numbered 26,000, and in that year a loss of 800 bombing planes is admitted, at a cost of more than 1,000 million dollars. Weight of bombing is now at a rate of over 50,000 tons a month. Each of the big B52s can carry scores of 500 lb. and 750 lb. bombs. On one mission in April 1966, 625 tons of bombs were dropped on a single target; and throughout the summer scarcely a week passed without U.S. official sources having declared that a "new record" had been achieved in missions flown and weight of bombs.

Only in the imagination of Mr. Harold Wilson do U.S. airmen always hit their targets and nothing but their targets. Common sense tells one what is the meaning of saturation bombing through cloud cover.

A Grim War

Against the areas of South Vietnam outside their puppet's control there are of course no target limitations at all, and few of weapons. Fragmentation and Lazy-Dog anti-personnel bombs, napalm—which turns people into torches—and numerous kinds of defoliating or crop-destroying chemicals and "humane" poison gases are among the benefits of civilisation which, contrary to the Geneva Conventions, signed by nearly all powers except U.S.A., have been introduced into these areas to convert the inhabitants to acceptance of the U.S. recipe for happiness. As for accuracy of air bombing, U.S. press correspondents have revealed repeated instances in which the pilots have destroyed the wrong villages, sunk their own ships, bombed and dropped napalm upon their own troops. South Vietnam National Front for Liberation spokesmen have given civilian casualties in the south as 200,000 killed, 800,000 wounded, 500,000 imprisoned, millions in concentration camps called "strategic hamlets".

The ruthlessness employed by the U.S. forces in this way is without precedent or limit, and the evidence of war crimes—including even the torture of prisoners with U.S. officers standing by—depends not just on the charges of victims or opponents, but on the abundant testimony of U.S. eyewitness reporters, returned officers and men, and the boasts of even official communiqués that score every killing as a triumph.

Both the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) have set up commissions of investigation of war crimes, and their first reports contain more than enough evidence to justify the demand which is now being widely raised throughout the world, that such crimes should not go unpunished.

But all this effort has not succeeded in strategically modifying the situation in which four-fifths of the territory of South Vietnam is controlled and administered by the National Front for Liberation, only one-fifth—the principal cities, airfields and military bases—being held by the so-called Saigon Government installed by the U.S. military. In the whole of 1965, admitted the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent, Frank Robertson, only 2.4 per cent of the territory "has been regained and secured".

No wonder President Johnson and the U.S. Command find themselves confronted by a serious problem.

WHITHER JOHNSON?

"Get on or get out" is, in simply stated terms, the apparent alternative. It is in these terms that the war is being argued by the so-called hawks and doves in U.S. politics. The Republican opponents of President Johnson are attempting to capitalise on his frustration. Goldwater and Nixon call for the intensification of the war. The aged Eisenhower has spoken of nuclear weapons and insisted (on TV, Sept. 19th, 1966) that the "free world" must not be deterred from using them when needed "in some outlying place where people and life seem to be cheap, and they want to have their way". The political bosses believe that expansion may win right-wing support in U.S.A. But it is not clear what it could gain militarily.

It is self-evident that the U.S. military campaign is stuck. Outside Saigon and the other occupied cities the writ of the U.S. puppet administration is totally ignored. In travelling between the towns, along the country roads, the ordinary Vietnamese pays his tolls to the N.F.L. administration; and the French rubber plantations in the countryside pay it their taxes.

In military terms U.S. spokesmen sometimes boast to correspondents of progress, saying that large-scale military operations have grown less of late, and the "enemy" seem to be relying on scattered "tip-and-run" operations. They seem to regard it as a triumph that the large-scale offensives of the National Front for Liberation that they predicted (and which no doubt existed only in their own hopes and imaginations) have not materialised. But this only means that the U.S. generals, despite their constant command of the air, their unique possession of tanks and helicopters, their overwhelming superiority in fire power, have failed to trap their enemy into doing what they wanted, and are now themselves back where they began.

Nor have the U.S. military made advance in the process sometimes referred to as "the winning of hearts and minds". Can they expect to gain the sympathy of peasants by massacring their women and children, burning their homes, and forcing them to pay rent to absentee landlords? Or of townspeople by the inflation and poverty, the brothels and corruption and flaunted wealth, that accompany a programme of "aid" and are the reality of occupation?

Where can all this get Johnson? And how can expansion help him? *The Times* (Nov. 12th, 1966) says that the Pentagon is con-

sidering ballistic missiles and battleship bombardment from the sea, to offset the present heavy bomber losses. But could that increase accuracy or lead to military advantage? U.S. Government spokesmen have admitted that more men are being landed, the prediction is a doubling of the U.S. troop total to more than 600,000 by the end of 1967. But will that alter the situation? U.S. military headquarters claim the strength of the forces opposed to them as stable over recent months at 282,000—that is to say, the U.S. have been unable to achieve anything effective with a superiority in numbers of more than 3 to 1. Would 4 to 1 make so much difference? What is plain is that enough Vietnamese are opposed to their purpose to make it impossible of realisation. The increase of U.S. conscript forces runs parallel to the decline of the ranks of the South Vietnam puppet army, wasted by mass desertion, while the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation can call on as many of its supporters as it finds necessary. In U.S.S.R., and many other countries as well, volunteers have offered to help in Vietnam against the invaders. Arms and training have been accepted, with warm appreciation.

What next then? Invade North Vietnam, as the puppet Marshal Ky demands? But what makes the U.S. generals who have not been able to achieve victory in their invasion of South Vietnam (or make home conscription popular) suppose they will do any better by invading North Vietnam? Bomb China? Why should this any more induce the South Vietnamese National Front for Liberation to abandon the struggle than bombing North Vietnam has done? Invade China? Bomb U.S.S.R.? This is where madness leads, and that the logic of war carries its own madness is the truth that underlies the warnings of U Thant and President de Gaulle.

Indeed, the U.S.A. has in fact no alternative to such madness but to make peace, and that means: "Get out".

VIETNAM OFFERS PEACE

However, faced with this dilemma, President Johnson seeks to escape from both its horns. The future of military action is unpromising, but he does not want to go. So he seeks to make peace without leaving, to win his objectives without having to continue to fight. This is the meaning of his series of "peace offensives", which the Vietnamese justly characterise as a trick.

Indeed, not only do the Vietnamese, the Chinese, the U.S.S.R., declare it trickery, but everyone who has given careful study to the facts and history of the Vietnamese problem can recognise the deceitful character of the United States Government proposals. To see this we have only to examine these carefully and contrast them with the peace programmes of the South Vietnamese National Front for Liberation and of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Mr. Wilson, and the successive British Foreign Ministers, Michael Stewart and George Brown, are the only world-ranking statesmen who have dared to back the American offers. Wilson, Stewart and Brown have even gone so far as to pretend that the Vietnamese have never

proposed a peaceful solution to the war, never expressed a readiness to negotiate.

This is entirely untrue. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation have repeatedly stated terms of peace as a basis for negotiating.

Where two sides both declare they want peace and express a readiness to negotiate, how to judge between them? Obviously, only on the fairness of the terms they propose.

What terms would you consider fair for a settlement in Vietnam? What terms would you consider fair if your country was being laid waste by an invader with whom you had never interfered, who had installed his troops and his bombers, and who had set up his own puppet ruler?

Why, first and foremost, surely, that he should go away; that he should withdraw his troops, his planes and his bases and all manner of his interference.

This surely is the most important thing of all. But the terms put forward by the Vietnamese Democratic Republic and the National Front for Liberation go much further. They embody, clearly set out, the guarantees of democracy and non-subordination to any outsider that the U.S. Government has so often pretended is its own objective.

From time to time U.S. spokesmen, to justify military intervention, have spoken of how they are fighting to prevent South Vietnam from being "seized by Communists", or "taken over by aggression from North Vietnam", or a solution "altering the military balance in South East Asia in favour of the Communists".

All these points are precisely taken care of in the peace proposals that the North Vietnamese Government and the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation have put forward again and again.

The position of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation is defined clearly in its programme of national reconciliation and reconstruction; and its objectives in the war are defined in its five-point statement of March 1965 solely as getting rid of the U.S. intervention to enable such self-determination to take place.

The Four Points

In April of the same year, the National Assembly of the Democratic Republic (North Vietnam) unanimously approved its government's stand—four points clear and simple:

> **1. Recognition of the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people which are independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. In strict conformity with the Geneva Agreements, the U.S. Government must withdraw its troops, military personnel and weapons, ammunition and war materials of all kinds from South Vietnam, dismantle the U.S. military bases there, abolish its military alliance with the South Vietnam administration and at the same time stop its policy of intervention and aggression in South Vietnam. The U.S. Government must stop all its acts of war against North Vietnam, and put a definite end to all acts of encroachment upon the territory and sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.**

2. **Pending the realisation of the peaceful reunification of Vietnam, while Vietnam is still temporarily divided in two, the military provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam must be strictly respected: the two zones must refrain from joining any military alliance with foreign countries, there must be no foreign military bases, troops or military personnel in their respective territory.**
3. **The affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves in accordance with the programme of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation without any foreign intervention.**
4. **The realisation of the peaceful reunification of Vietnam must be settled by the people in the two zones without foreign intervention.**

What is wrong with this as the basis for discussion? There is nothing whatsoever claimed in any of these points which is not exactly consistent with the existing international Agreements on Vietnam already arrived at in Geneva in 1954. Indeed, the preamble to these four points state that the purpose of the proposals is to respect the Agreements and correctly implement them.

No Foreign Troops

These Agreements say that no foreign troops may enter Vietnam. Hence no U.S. troops may go or be there. They say that neither part of Vietnam may join any foreign alliance. This is repeated in the first two points.

In non-diplomatic language this means that nothing must be done to drag Vietnam or any part of it into one or another bloc. No power may involve it, or bring its troops there or station bases there —not China, not U.S.S.R., not U.S.A. The U.S. may be assured that the South East Asia strategic balance will not be upset—and the Vietnamese may be assured that no one will be allowed to encroach on them. Fair?

The next point, No. 3, is frequently deliberately misrepresented so as to lead to misunderstanding. Mr. Stewart used to do this. Mr. Rusk and Mr. Brown still do. They pretend that this is a claim for rule by the National Front for Liberation or, even, as they pervert it, the Communists or "Vietcong". In their language, which does not differ in any way from that of the late Senator McCarthy, anyone who associates with Communists or even has the same objectives as Communists may be spoken of as a Communist. It is the same thing as the way in which, during the last war, Goebbels and some extreme reactionaries in Britain and U.S.A. used to call Churchill and Roosevelt Communists for standing firmly in alliance with the U.S.S.R. to break the Nazi power. The "programme of the South Vietnamese National Front for Liberation" happens to be not a programme for communism or even socialism. The National Front for Liberation is in fact not one party, but a coalition of patriots, led by distinguished South Vietnamese of many different parties and political and religious groupings, united against the foreign occupation of their country and its rule by an invader's puppet. And its *programme* provides precisely for the setting up.

by agreement and negotiation, of a yet wider and all-inclusive coalition, not only of the National Front for Liberation as it is, but of all other groupings now in the U.S. occupied zone, the various sects, Buddhist and Catholic, university men, merchants and not excluding personages from the various administrations in Saigon.

The words of that programme say there must be specifically "a broad national democratic coalition administration formed including representatives of all strata of people, nationalities, political parties, religious communities and patriotic personalities". It calls for election of "a new National Assembly through universal suffrage". For promulgation of "all democratic freedoms: freedom of expression, of the press, of assembly, of association, of movement". Guarantee of "freedom of belief; no discrimination towards any religion on the part of the State". Grant of "freedom of action to the patriotic political parties and mass organisations, irrespective of political tendencies". "Amnesty to political detainees . . . dissolution of all concentration camps under any form whatever . . . strict ban on all illegal arrests and imprisonments". Help to "industrialists and tradespeople to rehabilitate and develop industry both large and small". Abolition of production taxes. Equitable and national tax system, with abolition of arbitrary fines. Labour protection regulations. Social relief. Land rent reduction. Guarantee peasants' right to the land they occupy. "Through negotiations, the State will purchase from landowners at equitable and rational prices all land held by them in excess of a given area, fixed in accordance with the concrete situation in each locality, and distribute it to landless and land-poor peasants free of charge and with no conditions attached".

Of special significance for Vietnam's future relations with other states, the programme clearly states the National Front for Liberation's desire for "diplomatic relations with all countries irrespective of political régime, in accordance with the principles of peaceful coexistence", and its intention to "refrain from joining any bloc or military alliance or forming a military alliance with any country".

This is the programme that apologists for Johnson use in order to terrify the world and cry "Red Revolution"! Could there be a greater contrast to the theory or practice of the U.S. nominated Marshal Ky and his handful of officers, black marketeers and landlords and his hundreds and thousands in "strategic villages" and in jail?

One Country

Point 4 too is strictly in conformity with the Geneva Agreements, which made crystal clear that North and South Vietnam were not to be considered as two separate states: "the military demarcation line is provisional and should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary". They laid down that general elections were to be held two years later to express the national will on unity, and conversations for these were to be opened between North and South within a year. But within a year, the U.S. Government, which had refused to endorse the Agreements,

had installed their first puppet in South Vietnam, loaded him with money and arms, and surrounded him with "advisers" who supported him in refusing the talks on internationally supervised elections for which the North was willing. Of course much time has passed since then. The two parts which were to be so briefly divided have developed in different ways since then, and in the South there will first be much to do in the way of learning to live together as an aftermath of war. President Ho Chi Minh, the great national hero who is so respected by all the Vietnamese people, North and South, has said that plebiscites to decide the matter could hardly be expected now for ten or fifteen years. But what is certain is that the Vietnamese must decide. No outsiders could—without reviving war—constrain them against their will to join together, or stay apart. Nor would they have any right to do so.

That the attitude on the part of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation has in no way changed, either by hardening or weakening, since it was first made clear in its own five points, and despite all the violence and intimidation launched since, is demonstrated afresh by the recent statement of its chairman, Nguyen Huu Tho, to the Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett. He defines the conditions of a real peace in South Vietnam and the basis for the only correct solution as:

> **(1) The U.S. must end its aggressive war in South Vietnam, withdraw the troops and weapons of the U.S. and its satellites from South Vietnam and dismantle all U.S. military bases there.**
>
> **(2) The U.S. must respect the national rights of the South Vietnamese people, which are: independence, democracy, peace and neutrality. The internal affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves without foreign interference, the reunification of Vietnam must be decided by the people in both zones of Vietnam.**
>
> **(3) The South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, the sole genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people, must have its decisive place and voice in any political solution concerning South Vietnam.**

And further, in reply to a specific question about co-operation with all Vietnamese, including those who have participated in the Saigon Governments of Ngo Dinh Diem and succeeding puppet governments, he replied that, yes, "there will be no grudge for their former activities, political tendencies or viewpoints, nor any discrimination with regard to nationalities or religious communities".

Fair Discussions

These points, and the famous four points, thus are not only a perfectly practical and fair basis for ending the war. They are the only practical and fair basis. For no other is likely to be permanently acceptable to the Vietnamese people, whoever might sign it. They safeguard every *legitimate* interest which the U.S. spokesmen have given for being interested in Vietnam. Nor are they put forward as take it or leave it, but as principles which, once recognised, can be followed by negotiation to secure their best implementation.

Many pretences have come from Washington (and Downing Street), and been picked up by their propaganda followers, to the effect that Ho Chi Minh was demanding that the last U.S. soldier leave, before any discussion. This is not so either and has never been so.

The same North Vietnam General Assembly session that put the four points forward added:

> **"The National Assembly and Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam hold that the above stand constitutes the basis for the most correct political settlement of the Vietnam problem. Only when this basis is recognised can there be favourable conditions to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem, and is it possible to consider the reconvening of an international conference of the type of the 1954 Geneva Conference on Vietnam".**

The fact that existence of such fair and clear proposals for peace negotiations can be totally ignored, or misrepresented and declared unacceptable out of hand by President Johnson and his various subordinates, as well as his tame parrots in Downing Street; the fact that immediately after hearing them he started intensifying the bombing and speeded up the landing of troops, throw a sinister light indeed on the real intentions behind the various U.S. "peace" offensives.

THE BIG FRAUD

Are the Johnson peace offers sincere? If we are to judge them by the same criterion that we have used in examining those from the side of his opponents in Vietnam we are at a disadvantage, since his have never been precise, have never been explicit.

An offer of "unconditional" negotiations may sound very broad-minded, but it has the disadvantage of containing no commitment. If made in bad faith—and there are strong reasons, as we shall see presently, for suspecting its good faith—it has the advantage of avoiding exposure of reservations which public opinion might not support. In any case it contains no element capable of creating trust in those who have good reason to mistrust it.

From time to time President Johnson or some other administration spokesman makes a statement about ultimate withdrawal, or having no intention of maintaining permanent bases in South Vietnam. But always it is hedged around with so many conditions that the withdrawal is relegated to the dim and distant future, or made so entirely dependent on the judgment of the U.S. President—as in the phrase "not a day longer than necessary"—that the "promise" becomes no engagement at all.

U.S. troops will withdraw "when North Vietnamese aggression has been vacated". This is not very much help because as North Vietnam states, it has never committed aggression (and it has not, on any basis known to international law). Mr. Stewart used to try to justify U.S. accusations and interventions by a report of the International Commission set up to observe the Geneva settlement. This asserted—by majority—that there was evidence that the

North had sent arms to the South. But arms supply across a frontier does not constitute a violation of international law. Perhaps it should, but it doesn't, and British as well as U.S. Governments have constantly engaged in this practice throughout their history, and do so today, without being bombed by anyone as punishment.

Further, and still more important, this very same report of the Commission also unanimously declared that armed intervention by the U.S.A. in contravention of the Geneva Agreements had taken place earlier than anything that North Vietnam did in answer and on a far greater scale.

The Sole Judge

This phrase too leaves the U.S. administration as sole judge of what it really means, or when troop withdrawal shall take place. They will withdraw—"perhaps" only—"when a South Vietnamese Government asks them to do so". This is little help, so long as they support Ky as puppet head of government and assist him to murder, jail or otherwise crush any Vietnamese, National Front for Liberation or otherwise, who may show signs of wanting them to end the war and go. They will withdraw "when the sovereignty and independence of South Vietnam is assured and there is no longer any danger of it falling into the hands of Communism". This is equally unhelpful, considering that the right to self determination by the Vietnamese of their own affairs, whatever politics they choose to decide on, and the ultimate unity and integrity of Vietnam as one whole, both recognised internationally by the Geneva Agreements, are exactly what the whole war is about. Considering too that in U.S. official vocabulary "Communist" is a word applicable to any government or party or individual who does not do exactly as you want.

The latest double-talk Johnson offer about withdrawal, contained in the Manila declaration, says it may take place within six months after North Vietnam has withdrawn "all military and subversive" elements from the South, ceased "inflation" and "the level of violence has been reduced". (Incidentally, before the ink was dry on the declaration, the *New York Times* quoted U.S. officials as explaining that the North Vietnam withdrawals must include any fighters sent in even if born in the South. This, though more than a quarter of Ky's own selected Constituent Assembly, as well as Ky himself, are from refugee feudal landowning families fled from the North!) "Six months" sounds nice and short and definite, but this proposal, read carefully, simply means that, quite regardless of any withdrawal of North Vietnamese regulars who might be in the South, the U.S. is to be entitled to keep its own force there—where so far it has no right but its own aggression—so long as any substantial number of South Vietnamese people continue to resist.

But there is another and highly cogent reason for the Vietnamese regarding all Johnsonian peace overtures as tricks. It so happens that always, invariably, as night follows day, they are followed by violent intensification of the war. The Vietnamese, and not only the

Vietnamese, see in them nothing but the preludes and even excuses for new slaughter. They see the Johnson administration as increasingly sensitive to public opinion, both at home and elsewhere, which is averse to escalation of the war. And whenever a new "peace" offer is forthcoming from him, in response to a Commonwealth Prime Ministers' resolution or a United Nations General Assembly meeting or the like, they take it as a sign that some new devilry has been decided on, is in active preparation, and only awaiting "rejection of the offer" to be launched on its bloody course. They brace themselves for it, and it happens. And the hypocrisy of it makes them sick.

The fact is: the U.S. administration is not yet prepared to make any peace that leaves the Vietnamese people free to decide their own future. It has not abandoned its plans to wreck the Geneva Agreements and detach South Vietnam in order to annex it to its sphere of strategy and economic exploitation. "Peace" in Johnson's mouth merely means: being allowed to do this without resistance.

Whose Aggression?

The four points for peace of North Vietnam listed in the previous section are not only the fair and only possible stable solution—they sum up in detail what was already internationally agreed for Vietnam by the Geneva documents of 1954. Foster Dulles, then the U.S. Secretary of State, never concealed his hatred of them. He walked out of the Conference, and the most his deputy was authorised to say, when—alone of the powers present—refusing to endorse, was that the U.S. "will refrain from the threat or use of force to disturb them". In other words it served notice that it held itself free to disturb them in every other possible way. Which is what it did forthwith: installing its puppet Ngo Dinh Diem, brought from the U.S.A., and rushing in its money, arms and "advisers" to back him in refusing to carry out the Agreements, and in rounding up, shooting and mass poisoning opponents (and, some while later, overthrowing him through the C.I.A. and having him, too, shot when he wavered and looked like possibly compromising). In the Johnson (and Wilson) Vietnam vocabulary "aggression" is the word not for your own intervention, but for resistance to your intervention; "force" applies to the efforts at protest of the great majority, denied by you and your puppets all democratic rights or avenues of objection. It never applies to your own efforts to bomb or massacre them into submission.

This then is the specific meaning, in the Vietnam context, of the word "unconditional" attached to every U.S. negotiation offer. It sounds grand, but it means, for the Vietnamese struggling for liberation and national independence, back to square one; surrender of the whole principle which they are fighting to preserve and which the U.S. has been working and slaughtering for twelve years to cancel out, even before negotiations start. The Vietnamese have been struggling for their independence for more than 30 years now—against the French, against the Japanese, against the French again

and now against the U.S. They will continue the struggle, not only another 30 years if need be, but so long as they exist; for it is their country; they live in it. Their right of independence was internationally recognised to them by the Geneva Agreements as long ago as 1954, and this they will never abandon. But that, precisely, is what the U.S. Government is calling on them to do, by its attachment of "unconditional" to every offer of negotiation, and its insistence, in the lipservice paid to "withdrawal", on the right to ensure wiping out of all effective resistance to its puppets, before its forces even start to go.

CLOWN BROWN

Mr. Johnson has two prongs to his strategy to make his opponents give way: the terror bombing and the "peace offensive".

Mr. Wilson and now Mr. Brown have constituted themselves the errand boys of Mr. Johnson's second prong. For ten years after the Geneva Conference was concluded it was in the hands of successive British Foreign Ministers—as co-chairmen of the Conference—to decide if it should be reconvened. For ten years and more each turned down all protests from the North Vietnam Government, requests by China, approaches from the Soviet co-chairman. Each time the British chairman asked advice from the U.S. State Department and then barred the conference recall.

Now the Labour Government continues where the Tory Government left off. As bound by the Geneva Agreements, and providing a co-chairman of the conference, its duty should have been to ensure that these Agreements were kept and, consequently, to have condemned and endeavoured to put an end to U.S. intervention, which is totally unauthorised by them. Instead, it has always emphasised that it supports U.S. policy—the only one of the Geneva countries that has done so—and whenever Wilson or a British Foreign Secretary makes any ostensible move for peace, he is sure first to secure approval from the White House. Is it any wonder that the Vietnamese do not trust them and that other prominent world statesmen do not take them seriously? When Mr. Brown came to office as Britain's Foreign Secretary he declared unabashed he would devote himself, regardless of rebuffs, to increasing efforts to mediate in the war. His proposals at the Labour Party Conference, repeated at the United Nations General Assembly, fell to the ground with a resounding thud. His portrait, widely circulated, showing him grinning in the embrace of a smiling Johnson in the White House grounds, hardly commended him to serious attention as an impartial would-be intermediary.

But when Wilson and Brown talk about peace, they send messages to all kinds of capitals and approach all manner of quarters except those vitally concerned: the Vietnamese people. They address Peking, Moscow, Hanoi even—but the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation is beyond the pale. This is just a carbon copy of the White House position which, to conceal its own unjustifiable

intervention, has always pretended that the opposition to its policies and puppets in South Vietnam stemmed from anywhere but among the people themselves. It was a "Soviet conspiracy", a "Chinese conspiracy", a "North Vietnamese aggression"—anything to conceal that the whole trouble the U.S. has encountered is due to the fact that the American-installed and American-sustained government of South Vietnam repudiated the Geneva Agreements and tried to crush all opposition; so that for their freedom and to save their lives the people of the South had to rise in arms. When Brown asks Gromyko to intervene in Hanoi, he means: bring pressure to bear on Ho Chi Minh to give in. In calling upon the U.S.S.R. and North Vietnam and not recognising the representative character of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, Brown, like Johnson, is really calling upon them to desert the South, to help the U.S.A. gain the victory it cannot win by arms. All this ignores the key fact that the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation is indeed a National Front and its programme a national programme, whereas Ky and every other U.S. puppet represents nothing and never has represented anything but the U.S. military who sustain him. The Brown proposals place North Vietnam, which is being bombed in violation of international law, on the same footing as the U.S., which is occupying South Vietnam in breach of the Geneva Agreements, and leave the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation in a position of total obscurity. "I welcome the United States assurance that this question is not an insurmountable problem" says Mr. Brown. This despite the fact that so far President Johnson has never explicitly expressed a willingness even to talk to the National Front for Liberation and publicly embraces Ky who proclaims that this will never be allowed.

Stop For Good

It is instructive to compare what Brown calls his "constructive" approach with that in the message sent by U Thant to the National Convention on Peace in Vietnam, chaired in London, November 1966 by Lord Fenner Brockway. The British and U.S. Governments, who profess both to desire peace and to admire U Thant's work as United Nations Secretary General, invariably ignore his views which are totally opposed to the policy the latter pursues and the former supports. "There is no other way" (to peace), he says, "but a return to the 1954 Geneva Agreements guaranteeing the independence and neutrality of the *whole* of Vietnam." (Precisely what U.S. effort and intervention has been designed to prevent.) He calls for "willingness to enter into discussions with those who are actually fighting". Conflicting views among the Vietnamese concerning the future of South Vietnam can only be reconciled by the people of South Vietnam, they cannot be decided beforehand. This must be without war or foreign intervention. Military activities should be scaled down by all, he thinks. And point number one is that the bombing of North Vietnam must stop: "there should be no conditions, no time limit".

Mr. Brown's ideas are exactly the opposite of this. His clauses are full of high-sounding phrases about elections and amnesties and guarantees. But who is to do the guaranteeing? The Ky Government or any other the U.S. chooses, for the U.S. troops are to remain in occupation not only throughout negotiations but for two years after their successful end. And if, when it comes down to brass tacks, the U.S. views on this subject are not acceptable to the South Vietnamese, what then? Mr. Brown's very first clause, number one, reads:

> *"The bombing of North Vietnam by United States and South Vietnamese aircraft should cease, and a pledge would be given that bombing would not be resumed unless and until the conference has met and failed, and the war restarted."*

Thus negotiations are to be held under the threat that the U.S. may at any moment restart its bombing, its napalm and its toxic gases. It is to be agreed by all parties that President Johnson has only to dig in his toes at any point, and he may restart killing to force his opponents to give way; and what, under international law, has been illegal and murder up to now will henceforth be sanctified by Mr. Brown's proposals.

No wonder Johnson hugs him. Mr. Brown as a mediator would make angels weep. The Labour Government does not even recognise or maintain diplomatic relations with the North Vietnam Government, or allow spokesmen from either North Vietnam or the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation to visit Britain and meet the British people. This kind of echo to Mr. Johnson shames Britain, invites disaster and, until it is changed, prevents Britain from playing any role for peace. In clear terms, Mr. Brown must be taught to do better.

TO WIN PEACE

Escalation has its own logic. As *The Times* wrote (9th August, 1966):

> *"Faced with an increasingly expensive total of aircraft losses and no tangible political and military gain to show for it, the Administration may find it hard not to react by ordering the bombing of more 'lucrative' targets to justify the losses and bring stronger pressure on Hanoi. The main danger lies in the fact that the failure of the first bombing phase has not warned Washington that the solution to the problem does not necessarily lie on the next rung up the ladder".*

U.S. bombing was started two years ago, ostensibly as a reprisal for an "attack" on torpedo boats (for which there has never been a shred of impartial evidence), and continued allegedly to stop "infiltration". The bombing is admittedly ineffective, since the North can rebuild bridges and roads faster than they can be destroyed from the air.

The new phase of which *The Times* spoke is not military but is openly "terror" bombing—that is, simply to force the Vietnamese to give way. This started against the centre of Hanoi just before Christmas. The U.S. Command, after a short period of typical evasion during which it blamed civilian casualties on the anti-

aircraft defence, chose Boxing Day to complain that these casualties were the civilians' fault, for living too near the new U.S. targets.

There are a lot of pressures making against peace. The Pentagon military chiefs, anxious to prove that nothing can withstand the military hardware for which they have made the U.S. taxpayer pay so dear. The business tycoons who are making a good thing out of the war, and the others who look for rich pickings from the investments they have been encouraged to make in South Vietnam itself. The currents of ignorance, racialism and national arrogance in the United States, so easy to rouse and which brought Goldwater over twenty million votes. The character of Johnson, vain, vindictive, impatient of advice, unforgiving to anyone who tells him truths he does not want to hear.

The Other Side

Some despair in face of such apparent obstacles. But there is quite another side of things. In actual fact the support that President Johnson's policy once commanded nearly automatically is today crumbling.

The Conference at Manila showed his weakness. Whom did he get to join him there? None but a handful of dependants—Thailand, the Philippines, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand. Oh, and Marshal Ky.

Johnson's Asian trip around the Manila Conference was clearly designed to impress his home electorate with a display of foreign support. It only confirmed his isolation. Even the "receptions" in the countries that he visited were not achieved without the cost of lives in counter-demonstrations fatally fired on by the police in two of them. To hold Thailand to its pro-intervention course he has had to put in 30,000 U.S. troops—more than the U.S. had in all Vietnam when Johnson came to power.

Within U.S.A. opinion polls show that more than half the electorate has lost confidence in Johnson's management of the war. *The Times* describes the deep disagreement with the Johnson policy in a typical Connecticut town that voted overwhelmingly for Johnson at the last election. Some were "sickened" by its savagery. There was "enormous unease". *The Times* Washington correspondent says "electoral defeat or a narrow victory in an election with Vietnam as the main issue would be disastrous. . . . Mr. Johnson has about eighteen months in which to persuade Hanoi to negotiate".

No statesman, whatever his material power, can indefinitely pursue a policy that causes such dismay. He needs support. *The Times* correspondent in Connecticut, already quoted, wrote: "As a visiting Englishman I found myself in the extraordinary position of defending not American policy as such, but the leaders of the United States, against Americans." That is the role that Wilson and Brown have cast for themselves in the Vietnam situation. Presumably, Wilson hopes to gain economic backing from Johnson's gratitude. Instead he has lost much—trust in Britain, respect abroad.

People of eminence in every walk of life in Britain, trade unionists ashamed at the betrayal of cherished traditions, angry and disillusioned youth, have urged the Labour Government to change its policy. The huge lobby of Parliament in 1965, the emergence of scores of local Vietnam Committees in towns and localities throughout the country, the protests of several scores of M.P.s, the adoption at the Labour Party Conference of a resolution calling for the stopping of bombing in Vietnam, the creation of a united youth committee on Vietnam embracing fourteen youth and student bodies—Labour, Liberal, Communist, religious, pacifist, C.N.D., etc. —the protest statement signed by some two thousand clergymen, the countless demonstrations, protests, meetings, leaflets, posters, banners, resolutions, whole page advertisements in national and local papers, letters to the press—all testify to the growing anxiety of wide sections of the British people and to their determination to compel the government to end its support for the United States aggression in Vietnam.

Sustain The Pressure

This pressure must be sustained and increased by every form of public protest. Both traditional forms of activity and new methods should be employed to arouse the conscience of the nation so that the government can no longer pursue its present policy on Vietnam.

We have come far since the U.S. administration launched on its policy of intervention in Vietnam, planning to achieve virtual annexation of the South with a few cold war words for cover. Now it has reached a scale of ruthless cruelty and destruction that has horrified the world and puts everyone in danger. The U.S. leaders talk of peace, but their aims remain exactly the same: to hold on to the South at all costs, outlaw or exterminate everyone there who oppose them. "Peace" to them still means this and never has meant anything else, whereas to the Vietnamese, South and North, who oppose them it simply means the right that should be that of all peoples, to decide their own future. There is no uncertainty about this and never has been. The way to peace has always been clear and Mr. Brown knows it. Instead of fulfilling Britain's obligations to sustain this right that Britain guaranteed (or acknowledged) the Geneva Agreements, he and Mr. Wilson have made themselves the errandboys of U.S. schemes, excusing the bombing, justifying the intervention, protecting President Johnson from his growing isolation in the world and the disillusionment of his own people. All of us in Britain have a deep responsibility to compel the Government to end its support for this U.S. war.

January, 1967

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